

Message Text

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R 281300Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6506

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

S E C R E T CAIRO 11579

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, XF

SUBJ: EGYPT AND THE PLO

1. EGYPTIAN POLICY TOWARD THE PLO GENERALLY AND IN SPECIFICALLY LEBANESE CONTEXT IS MIXTURE OF TOUGHMINDED REALISM, FLIGHTS OF FANCY, AND FOR SADAT PERSONALLY-TRUE SYMPATHY FOR THE PEOPLE THE PLO ATTEMPTS TO REPRESENT. UNDERLYING ALL GOE ACTIONS VIS-A-VIS LEBANON IS A BITTER ANTI-ASAD SENTIMENT THAT IS LIKELY TO BE OVERRIDING.

2. IN GENERAL, GOE BELIEVES STRONGLY THAT THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT, IF NOT THE PLO, IS HERE TO STAY, CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT BE DESTROYED MILITARILY, AND THAT LARGE PORTIONS OF IT WILL NOT ACCEPT SYRIAN HEGEMONY. FURTHER, THAT EFFORTS TO EXTINGUISH OR DOMINATE IT WOULD TURN IT SHARPLY TO THE LEFT, ELIMINATING MODERATE LEADERSHIP CADRES AND PROBABLY LEAD TO A SPLINTERING OF PLO INTO RADICAL, UNCONTROLLABLE GROUPS SUCH AS THE PFLP. (THERE ARE SOME WITHIN GOE WHO MAKE CASE THAT A MODERATE LEADERSHIP COULD EMERGE FROM THE SHAMBLES BECAUSE OF BANKRUPTCY OF RADICALS.)

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3. GIVEN INEVITABILITY OF CONTINUING PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT,

GOE IDEALLY WOULD LIKE IT TO BECOME A MODERATE ORGANIZATION OF LIMITED POLITICAL AND MILITARY STRENGTH, RESPONSIVE TO GOE REQUIREMENTS. IF SUCH A PLO IS TO BE MOLDED, IT MUST BE CHASTENED. EGYPT WAS NOT DISPLEASED THAT SYRIANS WERE DOING THIS JOB, BUT ONLY UP TO POINT THAT WAS REACHED EVEN BEFORE TEL ZA'TAR.

4. PLO IN LEBANON. THERE IS, THEREFORE, NO CONTRADICTION BETWEEN EGYPTIAN SATISFACTION AT SYRIA'S EARLIER TROUNCING OF PLO AND LATER FRANTIC EGYPTIAN EFFORTS TO SPEED UP MILITARY AID TO PLO FROM WHATEVER SOURCE. GOE POLICY GOALS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN (A) GIVE PLO SCARE OF ITS LIFE, PREFERABLY AT HANDS OF SYRIANS; (B) ESTABLISH EGYPTIAN CREDIBILITY AT PLO'S BEST FRIEND; AND (C) PREVENT PLO FROM SPINTERING INTO RADICAL GROUPS AT EXPENSE OF MODERATES.

5. UNDERLYING ALL GOE ACTION IN LEBANON IS OF COURSE A PROFOUND DISTRUST AND ANTIPATHY TOWARD ASAD AND THE SYRIAN BA'ATH WHICH DATES FROM BEGINNING OF SYRIAN ATTACKS ON SINAI II. JUSTIFIABLY OR NOT, SADAT AND FAHMY CONSIDERED THIS A BETRAYAL OF EGYPT THAT HAS MOTIVATED ASAD TO EMBARK ON AN ANTI-EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN TO REPLACE EGYPT AS THE ARABS' NATURAL LEADER. GOE DETERMINATION TO PREVENT ASAD FROM ESTABLISHING HEGEMONY OVER THE PLO AND LEBANON IS VERY REAL AND IS LIKELY TO BE THE OVERRIDING ELEMENT IN FUTURE DECISIONS, WHATEVER THEIR IMPACT ON THE PLO. THUS EGYPT, LIKE SO MANY OTHER ARAB STATES BEFORE THEM, IS USING THE PALESTINIANS IN PURSUIT OF ITS PERCEIVED NATIONAL INTERESTS. FOR THE TIME BEING, ARAFAT SEEMS TO SHARE THIS COMMONALITY OF INTERESTS, BUT IT COULD EASILY SHATTER IF, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PLO AND SYRIA REACH A MODUS VIVENDI. MUTUAL SUSPICION AND MISTRUST BETWEEN GOE AND ARAFAT CONTINUE TO EXIST.

6. AMONG THE OTHER MYRIAD OF POSSIBLE SUDDEN TURNS WHICH COULD OCCUR IN LEBANON, EGYPTIANS ARE PRODUCING ESTIMATES ON LIKLIHOOD OF SARG-MARONITE ALLIANCE BREAKING UP. SYRIANS CHANGED SIDES BEFORE, SARG INTERNAL PROBLEMS ARE FACTOR, AND CHRISTIANS THEMSELVES (ESPECIALLY CHAMOUN) MAY GET EDGY IF SYRIANS DO NOT SHOW ANY SIGNS OF WITHDRAWING. MARONITE-SARG SPLIT WOULD REQUIRE COMPLETE GOE POLICY REASSESSMENT ON HOW TO KEEP PLO MODERATE, WEAK, AND HOPEFULLY PRO EGYPTIAN.

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